

North Carolina Minority Health Facts: African Americans



State Center for Health Statistics and Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

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In 2008, North Carolina had the sixth highest total African-American population, and the seventh highest percentage African-American population, of the 50 states.¹ African Americans comprise a significant portion of the history, tradition, and culture of the state of North Carolina. To help ascertain the health status of African Americans in North Carolina, this report presents basic health facts in the areas of mortality, chronic diseases, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, health risk factors, access to health care, quality of life, maternal and infant health, and child and adolescent health. First we present some characteristics of the African-American population in the state.

Age and Geographic Characteristics of African Americans in North Carolina

In 2008, there were almost two million (1,990,496) African-American residents of North Carolina, representing 21.6 percent of the total population. While the percentage of the North Carolina population that is African American has remained relatively constant, the number of African Americans in the population has increased by 13 percent since 2000.²

The first map in Figure 1 shows the estimated number of African Americans living in each county and also the percentage of each county's total population that is African American according to 2008 Census population figures. It can be seen from the second map that counties in the northeastern part of North Carolina have the

largest percentages of African Americans.

African Americans in North Carolina are younger, on average, than the white population. According to the Census Bureau, the median age of the state's African-American population was 33.7 years, compared to 40.5 years for the white population of the state.¹ The average life expectancy at birth is 73.4 years for African Americans in North Carolina, compared to 78 years for whites.³

Social and Economic Well-Being

The percentage of African-American families in North Carolina living below the federal poverty level (\$21,834 annual income for a family of four) in 2008 was 21.3, compared to 6.7 for whites. The median annual household income where the head of the household is African American was \$32,345, compared to \$52,412 for households headed by whites. Forty-four percent of African-American families were headed by single female householders, compared to 12.6 percent of white families. Of the families with a single female householder, 37 percent of the African-American families lived in poverty, compared to 24.5 percent of the families headed by single white females. Twenty percent of African American adults ages 25 and older had less than a high school education, compared to 12.6 percent for whites. The unemployment rate for African Americans was double that for whites (11% vs. 5.4% in 2008).¹ Low income, low educational level, and unemployment are all associated with a higher rate of health problems.⁴